



KUKULU KE EA A KANALOA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NAVY COMPLETES WITHDRAWAL FROM KAHOLAWE

State of Hawai'i Takes Over Management of the Island and Waters

Honolulu, HI—The State's Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) announced today that on Friday, April 9, the U.S. Navy is expected to complete the removal of all personnel and equipment from the Kaho'olawe cleanup site and the island. The KIRC will then assume full managerial control of the Reserve, which consists of the island and the surrounding two-miles of ocean. KIRC Commissioner Burt Sakata and staff will be present to observe the completion of the demobilization and turnover of the island to the State of Hawai'i.

Commissioner Burt Sakata, said, "The Navy's departure from Kaho'olawe marks the end of a 63-year era and a new beginning for the people of Hawai'i." Since the outbreak of World War II in the Pacific, the U.S. Government has been in control of the island. Although use of the island as a bombing range ceased in 1990, and title was conveyed in 1994, access and cleanup operations on the island were under the control of the U.S. Navy until now.

In viewing the conditions of the island, Stanton Enomoto, Acting Executive Director for the KIRC remarked, "Kaho'olawe speaks for itself. The Navy did what it could to cleanup the island within the constraints of time and funding. Several hundred workers committed thousands of hours of difficult labor on a daily basis to clear the island of military ordnance, and the KIRC is very appreciative of those efforts. But looking out across the island, it is also apparent there are areas that remain uncleared, reminding us of the dangers that are still present, the safety precautions we'll need to take, and the work to be done in the future."

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When the Navy departs from Kaho‘olawe, 22,114 acres, or 77% of the island, will have been cleared of surface ordnance. Within this area, 2,650 acres, or 9% of the island, will have been cleared to a depth of four-feet to allow for greater use and restoration activities. The 1994 Memorandum of Understanding between the State and Navy established the standards for the cleanup: 100% surface clearance and 30% subsurface clearance. However, based on the federal law that authorized the cleanup, a time limit of ten years was specified regardless of the acreage completed. The 10-year period ended in November 2003 and since then, the Navy has been finalizing its activities and demobilizing from the island.

Commissioner Sakata, in consideration of the cleanup end-state, added, “While it would appear that the Navy is just walking away from Kaho‘olawe, it is far from the truth. Federal law specifically states that the United States is responsible and liable for the unexploded ordnance and environmental remediation on Kaho‘olawe. Further, in November of last year, the State and the Navy entered into an agreement by which the Navy will continue to respond to newly discovered ordnance on the island. The Navy further committed to the Governor to fund such work. Although the Navy’s physical presence will go away, their relationship to the State and responsibility to Kaho‘olawe will remain.”

The KIRC will now have the opportunity to get its organization setup on the island and begin to fully implement a range of activities. Enomoto remarked, “Now the real work begins. Although we have been coming to the island for several years, it has always been in the context of the ongoing cleanup and under the control of the Navy. Now that they are gone, we have much to do and much to learn about the island, operating the facilities, controlling access, and utilizing our resources in the most efficient manner. All the while, we must focus on maintaining safety and actively pursuing the KIRC’s vision for cultural and environmental restoration.”

Under State law, access to Kaho‘olawe is restricted unless authorized by the KIRC. Information about Kaho‘olawe may be obtained from the KIRC online at: www.kahoolawe.hawaii.gov, via email at: administrator@kirc.hawaii.gov or by contacting (808) 243-5020.